



The Presence of Courage and Strength

Topic

God's enabling

Theme

God's grace and presence provide us with strength and courage to do His will.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will trust God to provide the strength and courage to accomplish God's will for his life.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 4

Scripture Focus

Joshua 1:1–9

Summary

This lesson covers God's initial instructions to prepare Joshua to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land. God commissioned Joshua, gave the general borders of the Promised Land, promised He would be with Joshua, and restated the importance of knowing and following God's law.

Outline

I. God's Grace in Gifting the Land (1:1–4)

- A. God's new leader (1:1, 2a)
- B. God's gracious gift (1:2b–4)

II. God's Enablement for Taking the Land (1:5, 6)

- A. God promised His presence (1:5)
- B. God supplied strength and courage (1:6)

III. God's Directives for Living in the Land (1:7–9)

- A. God's law gave direction (1:7)
- B. God's law required meditation (1:8, 9)

Memory Verse

"Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:9).

No Strength, No Courage

Make a list of activities that might be difficult or scary for your learners to do. For example, run a marathon, clean the outside windows on a skyscraper, or clean out the gutters on your house. Read the activities one at a time. Have the learners stand up if they have the strength to do the task, raise their arms in the air if they have the courage to do it, and stand up with their arms raised if they have both the strength and the courage.

ASK: What is the connection between strength, courage, and success? *Most often success comes as we have both the strength and courage to accomplish the task.*

ASK: When have you experienced strength without courage or vice versa?

God commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous because He was with Joshua. If Joshua responded accordingly, God would make his way prosperous. God's enabling strength and courage are available to us too as we seek to do His will.

Four Boys and Their Bats

Four brothers who shared a bedroom growing up in Omaha, Nebraska, were sometimes unnerved by the creaks and sounds of their old house. When their parents were out past the boys' bedtime, the brothers would sometimes bolster their courage and strength by bringing four baseball bats to their bedroom. The two brothers on the top bunks left their bats on the floor, but they made their brothers below them practice handing their bats up to them. They didn't want to be helpless if the sounds they heard were actually prowlers creeping up the old wooden staircase. The prowlers never came. Good thing for them!

ASK: As a child, were you ever afraid of the creaks and bangs in the dark? (Q1)

ASK: What did you do to try to bolster your courage? (Q2)

ASK: What did you do to try to increase your strength? (Q3)

God commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous because He was with Joshua. Of course Joshua was about to face a real enemy. If Joshua responded accordingly, God would make him victorious. God's enabling strength and courage are available to us too as we seek to do His will.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. God's Grace in Gifting the Land (1:1–4)**A. God's new leader (1:1, 2a)**

The book of Joshua opens with the reminder that Moses had died (1:1, 2a). Moses had been God's servant for the past forty years. He had led the children of Israel out of Egypt and to the edge of the Promised Land. He had been God's means of leading the Israelites in all phases of their lives. He had conveyed to them God's law and acted as their judge. For Moses to be gone as Israel faced its biggest challenge yet was a potentially uneasy or even scary situation for the children of Israel. Moses' presence had provided a measure of stability for the people.

READ: Deuteronomy 33:26–29. **ASK:** How did Moses encourage the people in the face of his departure? (Q4) *He described God's then future work on their behalf in taking the Promised Land. God would act as both their shield of protection and the One to go before them to destroy their enemies.*

READ: Deuteronomy 33:28. **ASK:** Why would Moses' message in this verse have been particularly encouraging for Israel? (Q5) *It focused Israel's attention on enjoying the abundance of the Promised Land.*

Moses had groomed Joshua to take over for him after he was gone with the understanding that Joshua would be God's appointed man to take the helm. As mentioned in the previous lesson, Joshua would be responsible for leading Israel as both a military general and a shepherd (Num. 27:15–23).

B. God's gracious gift (1:2b–4)

God conveyed His message to Joshua in a rather matter of fact way. Joshua was to simply arise and lead the nation across the Jordan (Josh. 1:2). Getting a couple of million people across the Jordan while it was in flood stage was by no means easy. What a task to try to facilitate so early in Joshua's role as leader.

Rather than giving Joshua specific instructions regarding how to cross the Jordan, God turned first to the topic of the land. The Promised Land was essentially a gift to Israel (1:2). God promised the land originally to Abraham by means of a covenant (Gen. 15:18–21). The Abrahamic Covenant is unconditional, meaning God would give Israel the land without any conditions. Abraham placed his faith in God, believing one day God would give his descendants a land for their own. Israel's history, reviewed in the last lesson, reveals they didn't merit an abundant land from God. The land was essentially a measure of God's grace to Israel and a demonstration of His glory.

God, still focusing on the land, told Joshua that He had already given them all the land Joshua's feet would tread upon (Josh. 1:3). He then spelled out the major boundaries of the Promised Land (1:4).



MAP: Display resource 2 to show the approximate boundaries of the Promised Land.

READ: Joshua 1:3, 4. **ASK:** What questions would naturally come to Joshua's mind as he contemplated receiving the gift of the Promised land from God? (Q6) *Would the people follow him into the land? Would they fight to take the land? What would God's role be? How long would the conquest take?*

God's delineation of the boundaries showed the potential Israel had. Of course most of the land was under enemy control. Accepting the gift of the Promised Land would mean the people would need to follow Joshua into the land and fight to destroy their enemies.

II. God's Enablement for Taking the Land (1:5, 6)

A. God promised His presence (1:5)

The Promised Land was God's to give to Israel, but the people living in the land at the time were not going to just pack up and leave so the Israelites could move in. There was going to be a war. God addressed the coming conflict, assuring Joshua that no one would be able to stand before him all the days of his life (1:5). God's presence with Joshua and more generally with the children of Israel would enable them to successfully take the land.

READ: Numbers 13:33. **ASK:** Why was it important for Joshua to hear that no man would be able to resist Israel and stave off their conquest? (Q7) *Some of the men in the land were giant like compared to the Israelites. These so called giants scared Israel the last time they attempted to enter the land.*

Joshua had already stated his trust in God to deliver the giants into their hand the first time they approached the Promised Land forty years earlier.

READ: Numbers 13:8, 9. **ASK:** On what basis did Joshua appeal to Israel to go forward with the conquest despite the giants in the land? (Q8) *God was with them and the protection of the inhabitants of the land had departed from them.*

Now that Joshua was the leader in Israel, God was extra careful to assure the leader of His presence with him. He stated He would never leave Joshua and then repeated the promise by saying He would never forsake him. God's presence with Joshua would mirror His presence with Moses (Exod. 3:12; 33:12–15; 31:23). God promised He would be with Moses as the I AM (Exod. 3:14). To be the I AM is to be self-sustaining. God is dependent on no one. God never had a beginning and will never have an end. He is outside time and space and infinitely big and powerful. Obviously God's presence was more than adequate for the relatively small task of conquering the Promised Land.

B. God supplied strength and courage (1:6)

READ: Joshua 1:6. **ASK:** Why would God communicate His instruction on being strong and courageous in the form of a command? (Q9) *Because God was Joshua's strength and courage. God's presence with Joshua supplied Joshua with all the strength and courage He would ever need.*

ASK: What would be true of Joshua if he was weak and cowardly? (Q10) *It would mean that he doubted God's nearness and that he refused to draw upon Him for strength and courage.*

Both knowing God was near and the actual nearness of God worked in Joshua's mind and heart to make him strong and courageous. As Joshua stepped forward by faith, God's *strength* supplied the power to do the task and God's *courage* supplied the will and desire to begin it. One would have been incomplete without the other. Joshua and the children of Israel would have never crossed Jordan if they had God's strength but not His courage. Conversely, they would have been annihilated if they had His courage but not His strength. Joshua and the Israelite army needed power beyond their normal human limitations and courage that would cause them to attempt what others would consider crazy. In the end, God's strength and courage for Israel would work to bring Him glory.

When Israel had the opportunity to conquer the land forty years earlier, they refused to go forward claiming they had no strength to stand against the strong inhabitants of the land (Numb. 13:31; 14: 3). In reality, they had all the power they needed because of God's presence with them. They also thought they had no courage, but it was available to them if they would have simply trusted in God (14:8, 9). When God judged them for their rebellion, they suddenly acted courageously (14:39, 40). But God's strength had gone from them (14:41–43). They ended up running away from the enemy in a failed attempt to take the land on their own (14:44, 45). Joshua observed all this. Forty years later he fully understood what the importance of having both God's *strength* and *courage* as he led Israel into the Promised Land.

God returned again to the topic of the land, telling Joshua he would eventually divide the land up into sections for the different tribes to inherit (Josh. 1:6). This was again assurance that God would enable Israel to accomplish the conquest of the land to the extent that all the tribes would be settled in the land. God added that the land was the same territory He promised to Israel's *fathers*. God's intention all along was to be faithful to that promise.

RESOURCE: Display resource 4 as a summary of God's expectations of strength and courage as Israel faced the Promised Land.



The Abrahamic Covenant, which promised Israel a land of their own, was not voided when God eventually sent Israel into captivity for their disobedience. When Christ returns to set up His kingdom on earth, Israel will finally enjoy rest in all of the land God promised to them.

III. God's Directives for Living in the Land (1:7–9)

A. God's law gave direction (1:7)

God commanded Joshua for a second time to be strong and courageous (Josh. 1:7). He added a connection to the law to this command, stating that Joshua should be strong and courageous in order to do according to all the law. There is a sense in which the law assumed Israel's eventual presence in the Promised Land (Deut. 4:5, 14; 6:3; 8; 11:8, 9, 31, 32). Many of the laws and regulations governed how they were to treat God and each other while living in Canaan. Being strong and courageous was necessary to take the land and then enjoy the blessings of obedience to the law in the land.

God's laws were neither suggestions nor simply good ideas. They were specific. God expected Joshua to lead by example in following the law carefully. Joshua was to *turn not from it to the right hand or to the left* (Josh. 1:7). That means he was not to add to the law, making it stricter and loaded with extra details. And he was

not to treat the law lightly, making it more palatable and easier to follow (Deut. 4:2). As Joshua and the children of Israel obeyed God's law, they would *prosper*, or *be successful*, wherever they went. Specifically, they would chase the inhabitants from the land and enjoy the land to its fullest. The Mosaic Covenant God made with Israel was conditional. If they obeyed His law, they would enjoy His blessings and success in the land. If they disobeyed God, they would experience calamities and possibly even removal from the land.

READ: Deuteronomy 7:9–16; 28:1–14. **ASK:** What were some of the blessings God would bring on the Israelites as they obeyed Him in the Promised Land? (Q11) *God would multiply them, bless their crops, and cause their herds to grow. He also would not afflict them with the plagues He sent on Egypt. And He would give Israel victories over their enemies in the Promised Land.*

READ: Deuteronomy 28:15–63. **ASK:** What would happen to Israel if they forgot God in the land and served other gods? (Q12) *God would send them disease, draught, and finally an enemy to carry them away from the land.*

READ: Daniel 9:11, 12. **ASK:** What reason did Daniel give for Judah's captivity centuries after the conquest? (Q13) *They transgressed God's law, so God chastened them just as He promised He would in His covenant with the children of Israel.*

B. God's law required meditation (1:8, 9)

Obviously there was a lot at stake when Israel entered the Promised Land. So God reiterated His command concerning His law. He told Joshua to not let the law depart from his mouth (Josh. 1:8). God's law was to govern Joshua's speech, or interaction with God and others. One's words reveal one's heart. God wanted Joshua's heart to be directed by the law (Deut. 4:9, 10; 6:4–6).

READ: Deuteronomy 6:4–6. **ASK:** What did Moses command concerning the law? (Q14) *It was supposed to be in the people's hearts.*

In order for Joshua's heart to be directed by the law, Joshua needed to focus his mind on God's law by meditating on it. The word for *meditate* has the idea of *muttering to oneself*. It conveys the practice talking to oneself about the meaning and implications of the law. Joshua was to meditate on the law *day and night*. Such consistent meditation would help Joshua understand how to implement the law in his daily life. It would also help him understand God, Whose character and attributes are revealed by the law. Meditating on the law would make it less a compilation of rules and more a guide for living rightly with God (Deut. 6:7–9).

READ: Deuteronomy 6:7–9. **ASK:** What did Moses instruct concerning the use of the law? (Q15) *Parents were supposed to tell it to their children, talking about how it applies to daily life and using it to govern all aspects of their lives.*

God stated again that He would bless obedience to His law (Josh. 1:8). This of course is in keeping with the Mosaic Covenant God made with Israel on Mount Sinai.

But Joshua had to put first things first. If Israel never made it into the Promised Land, then they would not have the opportunity to enjoy the blessings God promised for their obedience to the law *in* that land. So God reminded Joshua for the third time that he was to be strong and courageous because God was with him as he embarked on taking the land (Josh. 1:9).

God's instruction to Joshua points out that Israel needed guidance in relating to God. God's law provided them with a proper understanding of God and their proper response to that understanding. They could not live rightly with God on their own. They would never figure it out. They would forsake Him and go their own way without the law as their guide. But the law was weak in that it could not make the Israelites righteous. It ultimately only pointed out where they fell short of God's standard. Today we understand that the law was not the end of God's plan for humanity. Eventually He sent His Son to die on the cross to do away with the law; therefore, we do not observe the law with all of its specific regulations and repetitive sacrifices. But the law and the rest of the Old Testament are valuable to us in that they show us God's heart and His plan for humanity at that time in history. And the New Testament, particularly the Epistles, give us similar commands to follow by God's grace. We obey God in the power of Christ and in gratitude for salvation through Christ (Eph. 3:14–21).

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Joshua could find strength and courage for leading Israel into the Promised Land because God had called him to accomplish that task. As we live according to God's will, He provides us with strength and courage too. However, we won't have God's enabling for what He has not called us to do. Joshua, for example, would have been without God's enabling if he had decided to expand the borders of the Promised Land down into Egypt or all the way to the Persian Gulf.

God Enables Us to Do His Will

Most of what God has called us to do is right in His Word. As we study it, we learn His will. We can be confident that God's presence with us will enable us to do His will. God may also call us to specific ministries. We can be assured of His enabling for those too.

ASK: Which is harder for you, believing God has supplied the strength to do His will or being willing to act on that strength? (Q16)

ASK: How might you build up your courage to do God's will? (Q17)

Make it clear that a lack of courage to do God's will is not a valid excuse for not doing it. When Paul said he could do all things through Christ (Phil. 4:13), he meant that through Christ he would also have the courage to do what God called him to do.

God Doesn't Bend to Our Will

We should not expect God to submit to our will. His strength and courage are

not available to us so we can accomplish our own will for our lives. For example, we should not expect God to enable us to become a billionaire mogul while we ignore His will for us in His Word.

ASK: How has a consistent study of God's Word influenced your life? (Q18)

ASK: How could you make your study of Joshua life-changing? (Q19)

Remind your learners that bits of truth scraped from the top layers of God's Word are helpful, but that it is as we mine God's Word and truly understand it that it affects our lives most powerfully and permanently.

Summary and Memory Verse

RESOURCE: Display resource 1. Add the following statement about God's faithfulness: God faithfully provides strength and courage to do His will.

Encourage learners to memorize Joshua 1:9. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.

● God's Faithfulness	
1.	8.
2.	9.
3.	10.
4.	11.
5.	12.
6.	13.
7.	

Gateway to Glory



Topic

God's gifts and His glory

Theme

God's underlying purpose in all He does is to be glorified in the world.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will consider how his life might bring glory to God.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 5
- Small gift (unwrapped)

Scripture Focus

Joshua 1:10–18

Summary

God gave instructions to the tribes east of the Jordan as the rest of Israel prepared to enter the Promised Land and claim what God had given to them. He reminded them of their obligation to help their fellow tribes conquer the land to the west of the Jordan. The tribes pledged their obedience, rehearsed the punishment for rebellion, and encouraged Joshua. They understood the connection between God's gift and His glory. The Promised Land was a gateway to God's glory.

Outline

I. God's Plan for the Nation (1:10–15)

- A. God gave individual responsibilities (1:10, 11)
- B. God gave individual rest (1:12–14a)
- C. God gave national responsibilities (1:14b)
- D. God promised national rest (1:15)

II. Israel's Pledge to God (1:16–18)

- A. The tribes made a promise to obey (1:16, 17a)
- B. The tribes said a prayer for Joshua (1:17b)
- C. The tribes rehearsed the penalty for rebellion (1:18a)
- D. The tribes made a plea to their leader (1:18b)

Memory Verse

"But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD"
(Numbers 14:21).